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Affirmation:

United Methodists for Gay and Lesbian Concerns

July or Aug 1980
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BY:.....PLANNING FOR A PEOPLE'S MINISTRY

The newly elected coordinating committee of Affirmation met in Toledo, Ohio the weekend of June 6-8, 1980. Immediately we made a covenant to work in a non-hierarchical, collective style. After all eight members drew up a list of specific tasks and projects to be accomplished over the next two years, we moved into a time of sharing personal agendas and issues that are significant in our lives. From there we began to divide responsibilities according to their personal meaning and relevance, each committing ourselves to the work which would be most satisfying, growthful, and likely to be completed as we bring together our personal and political lives. Amazingly, all of the fifty items on our original list were covered naturally through this process of taking on specific work related to our concerns, gifts, and desires to learn about new areas.

The central office of Affirmation will be located in Evanston, Illinois, where the contact persons will be Michael Troyer and Joan Clark. The new Affirmation address is: [redacted] Evanston, IL [redacted]. The newsletter will be published in New York, with Diane Kenty and Michael Collins coordinating the bi-monthly issues. The newsletter address will be: [redacted] New York, NY [redacted]. Peggy Harmon of [redacted] Dallas, TX [redacted] will continue to work with the incorporating procedures and the insurance plan. The members of the coordinating committee will be working as volunteers, each receiving up to \$25 per month for supplies and stamps, plus reimbursement for telephone expenses and some compensation for travel (as finances permit) related to the work of Affirmation.

Who are the members of the coordinating committee and what is their relationship to Affirmation?

Mary Gaddis, [redacted] Holy City, CA [redacted] is a lay woman who serves as Chairperson of the Commission on the Status and Role of Women in the California-Nevada Annual Conference. Mary is a skilled laborer doing carpentry and roofing until

becoming a plumber's apprentice, but her real vocation is toymaking. Mary first attended an Affirmation meeting in the spring of 1979.

Bill Matson is a deacon in the Northern New York Annual Conference presently on leave of absence. Bill's address is [redacted], Washington, D.C. [redacted]. He is the Co-Coordinator of Mid-Atlantic Affirmation and is working with the United Church of Christ on an exploratory project designed to develop ministries for young adults and minorities in the Washington area. Bill is a member of Dumbarton UMC and first attended a national meeting of Affirmation in the fall of 1979.

Diane Kenty is finishing her work at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. She is working as an intern at Washington Square UMC and has worked for the past two years as an intern with the Women's Division. Diane was instrumental in organizing the Lesbian and Gay Seminars Conferences and first attended Affirmation in the fall of 1977. Her address is [redacted] New York, NY [redacted].

Jim Scurlock is a lay man in the California-Nevada Annual Conference, having recently completed work as the Chairperson of the Conference Nominating Committee there. Jim first attended a national meeting of Affirmation in the fall of 1979 and lives at [redacted] Richmond, CA [redacted]. Jim, along with Mary, works with the Northern California Affirmation.

Joan Clark lives in Evanston, IL and can be reached at [redacted], Evanston, IL [redacted]. She is now staff coordinator of the Ecumenical Women's Center in Chicago.

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c/o Troyer & Clark

[redacted]
Evanston, Illinois [redacted]

Joan is one of the original organizers of Affirmation, having begun her work with us in the summer of 1975 while employed by United Methodist Women as a regional staff person, a position from which she was fired when she shared publically that she is a lesbian. Joan works with Affirmation Chicago.

Michael Troyer is a lay man in Evanston, Illinois where his address is [REDACTED] Evanston, IL [REDACTED]. He teaches church school in his local church. Michael is one of the original organizers of Affirmation Chicago and has been attending national meetings since 1975. He works as an office coordinator in another denominational office and does much support work with Chicago lesbian and gay groups.

Peggy Harmon is past co-coordinator of Affirmation, having first become involved in 1975. She is a feminist counselor with an interest, along with her lover, in issues of concern to lesbian mothers. Peggy's address is [REDACTED] Dallas, TX [REDACTED].

Michael Collins is also past co-coordinator of Affirmation and has worked with the organization from its inception in 1975. He is an ordained elder in the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference where he is temporarily on leave of absence. Michael's address is [REDACTED] New York, NY [REDACTED].

During the June meeting, it was decided that members of the coordinating committee will monitor all the boards, agencies, and commissions of the UMC. A proposal was heard for a national educational conference for non-gay/lesbian folk working with us, to be held next spring. Making arrangements with the local group for the Houston meeting is Bill Matson, and the program is being coordinated by Mary Gaddis and Michael Collins.

The committee decided to raise membership fees in order to help meet rising expenses. The rate for those who choose to receive the newsletter via our new bulk permit are asked to contribute \$15. They will receive the newsletter without an envelope (i.e., easily identifiable). For those who wish to receive the newsletter in a plain, sealed envelope, the rate will be \$20. This decision reflects a sensitivity to the generally lower incomes of visible lesbians and gay men and will allow us to take advantage of mass production systems and lower postage rates.

Michael is presently unemployed, Diane is a student, and Bill, Mary, Jim, and Peggy are underemployed. Members of the coordinating committee will need the support of Affirmation members as we undertake our work on a volunteer basis during the next two years. Subscriptions to denominational publications are needed, as is assistance with transportation, food, and shelter when the coordinating committee is working in your area.

The coordinating committee will make presentations at the September meeting in Houston and propose directions for the work of Affirmation in the coming two years. We invite your participation in that important gathering and in our ongoing work together.

THE CHURCH CHANGING

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

The California-Nevada Annual Conference passed a resolution calling for a three-year study of homophobia. The task force selected to implement the study will include an equal number of women and men, six of whom will be appointed by the conference program council and six to be selected by Affirmation of Northern California and Nevada.

Because a question was raised regarding the Discipline's anti-funding paragraph which prohibits boards and agencies from undertaking ministries with lesbians and gay men, a request was made at the conference for a ruling by the Judicial Council on the conference's right to create such a task force and study.

The California-Nevada Affirmation community had trouble finding a UMC church in which to hold their worship service. The difficulty was overcome, however, by Affirmation's willingness to set aside their anger and hurt and to work patiently with the liberal clergy who, fearful of the consequences in non-gay Sacramento, had rejected their request. Finally a UMC church was secured, and a very meaningful worship service was held.

Baltimore

The Baltimore Annual Conference approved a human rights resolution that made specific reference to lesbian and gay persons. The delegates called upon Maryland and West Virginia state and local legislatures to "enact legislation that would prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation."

General Conference Message

More Done than Said

"Disappointing". "Not what you hoped for" "Let down" "Devastating"... These are the words I heard people use to describe General Conference. I have a word too. It is very different from the others. My word is —

POWER/FUL

When I use that word, it is not meant to describe the actual proceedings of General Conference, its legislation, or the results of the legislation. Power/ful describes a presence at the conference, who we are and what we are about as Affirmation.

It is power/ful when a handful of Lesbians and Gay men can stand quietly in a hall or to the side of a room and affect the discussion of 1,000 people--without saying a word, just standing and being.

It is power/ful when one or two people in an entire delegation are willing to stand and be counted. It is power/ful when a person feels alone yet stands to say "yes" to Lesbians and Gay men.

It is power/ful to walk out of a de-humanizing Episcopal address.

It is power/ful to hear 200 straight folk sing with us, "We are a gay and lesbian people..."

It is power/ful to know what we are about; to speak it and to live it. It is power/ful to know we are Lesbians and Gay men, to hear both women and men speaking as Affirmation. It is power/ful to talk about working on the fringe and then be assigned a storage room, complete with rats, in which to hold a briefing.

It is power/ful to learn, and we learned a lot. We went in twos and threes for support. We learned to trust ourselves and our folk for that support. We learned that the media will use and abuse us whenever they can. We learned that when people are scared they will act violently--physically and verbally. We learned that we must take care of ourselves and each other. We learned that we are a people capable of expressing incredible energy...and love.

It is power/ful to know that no matter what General Conference did, we will continue. It is power/ful to know that we will be voted out, kicked out, thrown out, pushed out, talked out...out of our families, our jobs, our closets, our ordinations, our offices, our lives and yet we will not go away. IT IS POWER/FUL TO KNOW WE WILL NOT GO AWAY.

Power - to be able
capable, effective;
energy; right

oppress, rule, dominate;
tyranny,

Where do we go with our power and all that we've learned? How do we use and not abuse our being power/ful?

It is essential that we take what we have learned with us wherever we go. If we are to continue to be power/ful, we must recognize the right and responsibility we are claiming. We must not be co-opted by this system called The United Methodist Church. It is not power/ful to become just another bolt/nut/screw in the machine, but we must work alongside it as an alternative, an example to the church.

It would be "devastating" if we were simply voted into the system and became fully integrated with the UMC--a system that is not only homophobic but racist, sexist, and classist. We become counter-productive, power/less when we view acceptance as our reason for being.

We need to know the source of our power. We need to feel our wholeness and uniqueness. We must recognize that we are female and male; spiritual and physical; personal and political; individual and collective. We must use our power to define and resist our oppression, to define and refuse our roles and oppressors.

WE ARE A POWER/FUL PEOPLE

Affirmation Functions

COME TO THE FALL MEETING!!!

Join us at our fall meeting! We will be gathering in Houston, Texas for the week-end of September 26-28, 1980 to lay our plans for the next two years and share our ongoing journeys as lesbians and gay men in the UMC. Our hosts will be the Houston Wesley Fellowship, who are hard at work making arrangements for housing, food, and transportation.

HOUSTON

SEPTEMBER 26-28, 1980

As many women and men will tell you, the experience of meeting with lesbians and gay men from all over the country who share the same struggles is a rare opportunity--and should not be missed! Our attendance at national meetings has reached approximately seventy-five persons, and we're hoping for a big crowd in Houston.

Please fill out the pre-registration form below and mail with \$15 to: Bill Matson, [redacted], Washington, D.C. [redacted].

ing. Our times together in the past have proved exciting but also frustrating because of limited opportunities for sharing and getting acquainted. In addition, some women have felt anxious upon arrival at their first national meeting and would prefer to settle into a womanspace first.

If you are able to attend, contact Mary Gaddis, [redacted], Holy City, CA [redacted]. Please include thoughts on your particular needs and suggestions for planning the retreat.

The men of Affirmation will also have an opportunity to meet together before the opening of the full meeting. Initial plans are to meet beginning with dinner on Thursday evening, September 25th, at a beach location near Houston. One suggested agenda is discussion on a "practical theology" from the gay male perspective and sharing insights on such issues as ethical responsibility, living with but against an oppressively patriarchal institution, and other concerns of participants.

Because our meeting place would be at least an hour and a half drive from the Houston airport, arrivals should be timed around 5:00 p.m. Immediate expressions of interest are essential so that plans can be made. Please write to Bill Matson, [redacted], Washington, D.C. [redacted], and include suggestions for ways to use this time. Other than a few dollars for food, it is not expected that there will be any additional cost.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

I will travel to Houston by car _____ bus _____ train _____ plane _____

Date of arrival _____

Date of departure _____

I need transportation from the station yes _____ no _____

Flight/bus/train # _____

I need housing for Friday night _____ Saturday night _____

My special needs are _____